

**Hinesville First United Methodist Church  
Preschool & Kindergarten  
100 Memorial Drive  
Hinesville, GA 31313  
912.368.3355  
Updated: July 2008  
Director: Marian Letnaunchyn**

Welcome to the Hinesville FUMC Preschool & Kindergarten! Our school is an outreach ministry of the Hinesville First United Methodist Church to our community. Hinesville FUMC Preschool & Kindergarten welcomes all children in our program.

This handbook is a guide to the policies and procedures of our program. You will need to keep it for reference during the school year. If you have further questions or concerns please feel free to discuss those concerns or issues with the Director.

**Mission Statement**

The mission of Hinesville FUMC Preschool & Kindergarten is to promote the overall growth and development socially, emotionally, physically, spiritually and intellectually within a loving and innovative environment for children, to ensure they become caring, creative, and productive individuals. Through Christian love, we will provide a learning community with the highest standards in education.

**Philosophy and Purpose**

The Hinesville FUMC Preschool & Kindergarten strives to provide quality education in a Christian environment. Our program places emphasis on the child's own experimentation, self-direction and self-expression. We want to enhance personal, social and cognitive development through daily routines and activities. We also want to provide age appropriate challenges to assist the child in mastering these concepts. Our program provides a warm and nurturing environment to assist with the child's personal and educational growth.

Children ages six weeks through five years are accepted, regardless of race, creed or national origin. The Hinesville FUMC Preschool & Kindergarten places children in classes by their age as of September 1<sup>st</sup>.

### **Fees and Payments**

There is an annual registration and activity fee of \$95 for Preschool and \$125 for Kindergarten. This fee is non-refundable. Due to limited space, registration is done in advance. Tuition is an annual amount that may be paid in monthly installments.

Tuition is as follows:	Kindergarten	\$240 per month
	5 day Pre-kindergarten	\$220 per month
	5 day Preschool	\$220 per month
	4 day Pre-kindergarten	\$200 per month
	3 day Pre-kindergarten	\$185 per month
	3 day Preschool	\$185 per month
	2 day Preschool	\$150 per month

Each additional child receives a 20% discount. Full payment is due the first week of every month unless arrangements have been made with the Director. If payment is not received by the first school day after the 10<sup>th</sup> of each month, a \$15 late fee will be added to your tuition. There will be no reduction of fees due to holidays or brief illness. There is a \$25 returned check fee and a \$3 bank fee on all returned checks. Parents paying for the entire year's tuition by August 15<sup>th</sup> will receive a 5% discount.

### **Hours of Operation and Holidays**

School hours are 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Children may arrive 5 minutes before class begins, but 10 minutes is too early. Early arrival makes the first activity too long for a young child and interrupts teacher preparation time. Picking up your child promptly at dismissal time is very important. It is upsetting to a child to be left after other children have gone. Failure to observe the operating hours will result in additional charges.

A fee of \$5 per 15 minutes will be charged after the first incident of late pickup. The fees must be paid by the next school day. Failure to pay may result in the temporary suspension of your child. All late fees and charges are strictly enforced. Parents should submit a written notice of withdrawal from the program at least two weeks in advance. Failure to notify the Director of your child's withdrawal may result in full monthly tuition.

Please refer to the Preschool calendar for the holidays and breaks. We will comply with the Liberty County School System on emergency days off due to weather, etc.

### **Sign In**

Each child must be signed in each day. Please be sure the teacher is aware of your child's arrival and departure. These are very busy times of the day for the teacher. Please drop off and pick up at the classroom door. This causes less confusion in the room and does not distract the teacher's attention away from the other children. If your child needs to be picked up by someone other than the parents, you will need to submit *in writing* the names and relationship to the child they will be picking up. It is best if your child knows of this change in advance. No telephone calls of such will be accepted. This is for your child's safety.

### **Food**

Children should have breakfast before arriving to school. Please bring a lunch including a drink, napkins and utensils. All breast-fed babies must be able to take a bottle. Formula should be mixed before coming to the program. Younger children need to bring a cup with a lid. One year olds and up must be able to feed themselves. Try to bring a nutritious lunch for your child. Because of limited time, we cannot warm-up lunches. Please do not send candy in your child's lunch. Candy is a distraction to your child and to the others. Try sending a special note, your child's teacher will be happy to read it to them.

The parents will provide snack on a rotating basis. Each class will have a monthly snack calendar. If a parent fails to provide snack on their assigned day, there will be a \$5 charge. *The snacks that are provided should be nutritious.* Please remember to provide drinks with cups and napkins if needed. For your child's safety, please do not bring candy or gum. **For children under the age of three, please do not bring popcorn, raisins, grapes, or nuts.**

### **Toilet Learning**

All children enrolled must be toilet trained by 3 years. Our 3 year old classrooms are not equipped for changing diapers, and we expect the children to be toilet trained by the beginning of school. We realize that each child is different and has his or her own developmental timetable. Occasional accidents will occur, but consistent problems could lead to child's dismissal from the program.

Toilet Learning is both an exciting and challenging time for children and parents. Our staff is committed to facilitating this process. One of the most important factors in making this experience successful and as low-stress as possible is a family/teacher partnership that supports the child. Research shows that young children cannot successfully learn how to use the toilet until they are physically, mentally and emotionally ready. Positive toilet learning usually occurs when children have shown signs of physical control and awareness of their bodily functions and have an interest and curiosity about the process. Our toilet learning procedures follow the recommendations

of the American Academy of Pediatrics. We will work with you to make sure that toilet learning is carried out in a way that is appropriate for your child's physical and emotional abilities.

**When to begin toilet learning:**

Your child may be ready for toilet learning if he or she:

- Can sense that the bowels are full
- Can let you know when he/she has to go potty
- Understands what is expected
- Cooperates with your requests

The following guidelines are followed:

- Teachers and parents share information and make a plan consistent with home and school.
- Children are supervised during toilet learning and are praised for their efforts and accomplishments.
- Toilet learning is never coerced. The individual developmental abilities of each child are considered. Children are never reprimanded emotionally or physically for soiling, wetting, or not using the toilet.
- Reminders and encouragement to use the bathroom are provided throughout the day.
- Families should provide sufficient extra clothing for their children. If an accident occurs, the child is changed into clean clothes. Any extra clothes that are worn home should be replaced the next day.
- Families are kept advised on their child's progress on a regular basis according to family wishes.
- If a child has repeated accidents at school, the teachers and/or Director will meet with you to reassess the process. If we determine that your child is not ready for underwear, it may be necessary for him/her to return to diapers as we continue the toilet learning process.

**Clothing**

Children should be appropriately dressed for outdoor play and weather conditions. Due to safety concerns, children should not wear shoes without a heel or a heel strap. An extra change of clothes should be brought daily and left in your child's cubby. Please mark each item with your child's name. If your child is toilet training, two or three sets of clothes may be needed. Please bring at least 5 disposable diapers for infants and children not yet toilet trained.

Mark all of your child's belongings with their first and last name; this includes diaper bags, coats, lunch boxes, etc. We cannot be responsible for items not marked.

### **Daily activities**

We offer a planned and structured program of activities. Flexibility is present to provide for individual needs. Trained and qualified staff will provide stimulating activities, which are appropriate for the development levels of each age group. A variety of activities, which include a balance of active/quiet, group/individual and inside/outside, will be planned each day to foster optimal development. Each individual class will post a schedule of its daily activities. A well-rounded, developmentally appropriate curriculum is used at Hinesville FUMC Preschool & Kindergarten.

### **Field Trips**

Three year old classes and older will participate in field trips during the year. At times we will have in-house field trips where the adventure comes to us. Parent involvement is not only appreciated but also needed as parents provide transportation on all field trips. Lead teachers will notify parents in advance of each field trip. Parents must give written permission for their child to participate. If a parent elects for his/her child to not participate on a field trip, the Director will make all efforts to provide an alternative day for this child. However, for field trips that the Preschool participates in as a whole group, alternative arrangements may not be possible.

### **DISCIPLINE**

Our philosophy at Hinesville FUMC Preschool & Kindergarten is that everyone and everything is safe here. Our bodies, our feelings, our toys and our equipment are safe. If a problem arises, the teacher will remind the child of the rules. The staff will consistently use positive reinforcement for recognizing a child's appropriate behavior. Discipline is not only about rules, but discipline is most importantly about passing on the values that inform our rules, the belief system by which we know right from wrong without anyone having to tell us. Rules are not to make our lives easier but to help our children learn to contribute to society and to give them self-discipline to control their impulses. Children need rules from the beginning in order to learn respect for their own health and safety.

### **Biting Policy**

We want to insure that every child is safe while in our care. Our program provides an environment that encourages and promotes cooperative interaction, respect for others, and non-aggressive problem solving between the children. Biting is a normal stage of development for young children who are teething and are still developing their language skills. It is usually a temporary condition that is most common between thirteen and twenty-four months of age. This means that is a particular concern for the staff in the Toddler/Young 2's Room.

***For safety and health concerns, we take biting seriously.*** When it happens, it's very scary, frustrating, and stressful for children, parents, and teachers. It is also not something to blame on children, parents, or teachers, and there are no quick and easy solutions to it. Children bite for a variety of reasons: simple sensory exploration, panic, crowding, seeking to be noticed, or intense desire for a toy. Repeated biting becomes a pattern of learned behavior that is often hard to extinguish because it does achieve results: the desired toy, excitement, attention. Knowing that the effect of their biting will hurt another person is not yet a part of a child of this ages' mindset, so the "cause-effect" relationship is not internalized. Our teachers plan activities and supervise carefully in order for biting not to happen. There are times, however, when everyone cannot be within immediate reach to prevent a bite.

Our policy for handling a biting incident is the following:

1. The biter is immediately removed from the group with a firm NO. The bitten child is consoled and the bitten area washed with soap and water. If necessary, ice is applied to reduce any swelling or bruising. The biter is not allowed to return to play and is talked to on a level that he/she can understand, then redirected.
2. A written incident report is given to the parents of all children involved when they are picked up that day. The name of a biting child is not released because it serves no useful purpose and can make an already difficult situation more difficult.
3. We look intensively at the context of each biting incident for pattern, in an effort to prevent further biting behavior.
4. We work with each biting child on resolving conflict or frustration in an appropriate manner.
5. We try to adapt the environment and work with parents to reduce any child stress.
6. We make special efforts to protect potential victims.

We try to make every effort to extinguish the behavior quickly and to balance our commitment to the family of the biting child to that of other families. Only after we feel we have made every effort to make the program work for the biting child do we consider asking a family to withdraw the child.

### **Aggressive Behavior in Children**

Our program believes that early intervention is in the best interest of children, families, and staff. Our school is committed to addressing developmental and behavioral issues as soon as they arise. If our staff identifies developmental concerns, the parents are promptly contacted. The staff will work with the family to share information, make recommendations, and strategize an individual program for meeting the needs of the child.

Our staff uses positive guidance techniques when working with children. Some behaviors, such as biting, tantrums, sharing issues, or physical aggression, are typical developmental issues that we see in the Preschool environment. ***For safety and health***

***concerns, we take aggressive behavior seriously.*** While biting, spitting, hitting, pushing, and kicking can be quite natural responses to frustration in the younger child, children over two years old are expected to have outgrown these behaviors. Thus, they are not tolerated in the Early Childhood program (ages 2-6) and will be treated as serious disciplinary breach by the teachers and Director.

Our policy for handling behavior challenges is the following:

1. The parents will be contacted with detailed information.
2. The teacher and/or the Director and parents will meet together to share information, strategize an action plan to support the child, and set a time for a follow-up meeting. While suspension seems like an extreme solution, it is actually a useful and common tool in handling preschool misbehavior. It should be regarded by the parent not so much as a punishment, but as an opportunity for the child to forget his/her old pattern and relearn a healthier one.
3. During the follow-up meeting, the teacher and/or Director and parents will reflect and reassess the action plan and determine what, if any, future measures shall be taken to support the child. At that time, we may suggest collaborating with an outside childhood consultant.
4. If all of our interventions as well as those made by the family outside of school have not been successful, we may determine that we are unable to meet the needs of the child. At that time we will ask the family to find an alternate placement for the child.

In the event that the child is exhibiting behavior that poses a danger to other students or staff, the Director will require that the child be picked up from school immediately that day.

Our program celebrates the individuality of each child. We are committed to responding to a wide range of learning styles and needs. It is only on very rare occasions that a child's behavior may warrant the need to find a more suitable setting for care. Examples of such instance include:

- A child appears to be a danger to him/herself, other children or Preschool staff.
- Medical, psychological or social service personnel working with our school determine that continued care at our school could be harmful or not in the best interest of the child.
- Any other situation in which the accommodations required for a child's success and participation in school place an undue burden on our resources.

Because our programs are based on developing partnerships and supporting families, it is only on very rare occasions that a parent/guardian's actions or requests may warrant the need to find a more suitable setting for their child. Examples of such instances include:

- The parent/guardian fails to abide by our program's policies.
- A parent/guardian demands special services that are not provided to other children and which our school cannot reasonably deliver, including requests that are outside the philosophy of our program.
- A parent/guardian is physically or verbally abusive to children, staff, or anyone at the Hinesville First United Methodist Church.

### **Birthdays**

With prior consent of the teacher, parents may send a birthday snack for the class to share at snack time. Invitations to outside parties may be distributed at school **ONLY IF ALL CHILDREN ARE INVITED.**

### **Parent-teacher Communication and Conferences**

A close relationship between parents and teachers will benefit each child. If you have questions, concerns or suggestions, you are encouraged to share them with your child's teacher or the Director. A scheduled parent-teacher conference will be held in early December and an optional conference in early May. These conferences are for students in the Early Childhood Program (ages 3-6). Additional conferences may be scheduled at any time during the school year by parents. Please send a note to the teacher or call the Preschool office to arrange a time. Conferences with the Director may be arranged by calling the Preschool Office.

### **Child Abuse**

We are obligated by law to report all suspected cases of child abuse and/or neglect to the local authorities.

### **Health Forms**

All children must have up-to-date health forms on file at school **before the first day of child's attendance.** State law requires the verification of immunizations of all children enrolled. Immunization forms must be updated and kept current during the school year in order for a child to remain in school.

1. Physician's Form
2. Emergency Treatment Form
3. Certificate of Immunization ( GA Form 3231 )

### **Medicine**

The staff will administer medication by written and signed parental consent, which includes: date, name of child, name of medication, prescription number, if any; dosage; date and time of day medication is to be given. Medication must be in original container and correctly labeled with the child's name on it.

### **Illness Procedure**

Sick children should not be brought to school. This includes a fever of 100 degrees or higher and/or any communicable disease, including cold, diarrhea, nausea, vomiting, undiagnosed rash, boil, congestion, non-clear runny nose, "pink-eye", head lice, and on-going cough. ***A child must also remain at home for 24 hours AFTER the symptoms subside.*** Teachers, with the approval of the Director, may refuse to accept children who exhibit any of the symptoms listed above. No child will be accepted if he/she is ill. ***The school is to be informed immediately if a child contracts a communicable disease.***

If your child becomes ill while at school, he/she will be isolated and the parents will be contacted. Sick children must be picked up within the hour that the parents are notified. In addition, if your child is sick, please notify the school of your child's absence.

### **Emergency Treatment**

In case of emergency, accident or illness when a parent cannot be reached immediately, medical attention will be sought. Parents will be responsible for all medical fees above those covered by their insurance. An emergency treatment form is required for all children and will be on file at school.

The plan will include:

1. Name, address and telephone number of the child's doctor, nurse or PA.
2. Name, address and telephone number of the emergency room to be used in case the parents or physician cannot be reached.
3. Two names, addresses and telephone numbers of persons to contact in case of an emergency.

### **Children's Records**

The information in your child's records is considered privileged and confidential. Only those directly involved in the care of your child and preschool staff is permitted to have access to these records, unless you have authorized the release of this information through your written permission. Parents and guardians have the right to add information, comments, date or other relevant material to your child's record. You also have the right to make a written request to delete or amend any information contained in the record.

### **Parent-Community Relations**

We care about your child and his/her well being. We encourage parent participation and visitation at our school. Parents are allowed access to all parts of the program any time their child is present. We request your cooperation by not disrupting the program while visiting. Individual conferences with members of the staff may be scheduled at mutual convenience. We also appreciate special talents, skills and interests of the parents and welcome your involvement.

### **Absence/Tardiness Policy for Kindergarten Students**

School attendance is extremely important. If your child is absent more than 20 days during the school year, his/her file will be evaluated by the school board and classroom teacher to determine whether or not the child will be retained.

Class begins at 9:00 a.m. Being tardy disrupts the class for the entire day. All students must be in the classroom no later than 9:05 a.m. Students arriving after this time will be considered tardy. Once a student has been tardy 10 times, he/she will receive 1 absence. Please make all efforts to be on time.

### **Pre-K and Kindergarten Retention**

On very rare occasions it is necessary to recommend that a child repeat either Pre-K or Kindergarten. Retention is not a punishment, but rather a platform to establish a firm foundation for which the student will excel. We have only the best intentions for the student so that he/she will be able to perform at his/her best in later years.

Recommendation for retention is at the discretion of his/her teacher. If a child's teacher determines that a child would do better by repeating a class, the parent(s) will be notified before early registration begins.

### **Parents' Council**

The Parents' Council is made up of two room parents from each individual class and the Officers of the Council. The Co-Chairs of the Parents' Council, one church member parent and one non-church member parent, serve on the Preschool Board. If you are interested in serving on the Parents' Council, please let your child's teacher know.

### **The Preschool Board**

The Preschool is governed by a Board of Directors which is approved by the Charge Conference of the Hinesville First United Methodist Church. The Board is the policy-making body of The Preschool and is composed of parents of children in The Preschool as well as church members and staff.

### **Admissions Policy & Enrollment Procedures**

Parents who are interested in their children attending the Hinesville First United Methodist Church Preschool & Kindergarten need to complete an Application for Enrollment and pay the \$25 non-refundable application fee. If a current space is not available, this application along with the non-refundable fee allows the child's name to be placed on a waiting list. The waiting list applies to the ten-month program (fall/spring).

The class roster and size of the classes shall be approved by the Preschool Board and the Director of the program. The classes shall be filled according to the date of the application and in the following order:

- Currently enrolled students
- Hinesville FUMC members
- Siblings of currently enrolled students
- Former students
- Siblings of former students
- Other children not presently enrolled

Following the admission of students in the above categories, vacancies will be filled from the waiting list. Selection of children to be admitted to the program shall in no way be restricted on the basis of race, color, creed or national origin. Enrollment of children requiring special supervision will come under the review of the Board. A non-refundable enrollment fee of \$95 is required upon notification of admission for each school year. All required forms must be completed and returned prior to admission.

Enrollment for the next school year will begin in mid February and conclude in late March. Parents will be notified in writing of any policy changes in the Parent Handbook.

### **Parent Concerns**

If at any time you should have a concern about your child or his/her classroom, please address these with your child's teacher. We are unable to address your concerns when they are not spoken. If the issue is not successfully resolved, please contact the Director. In rare instances, the Preschool Board may need to be involved in resolving issues. We share your interest in seeing all children in this program grow and thrive. We are here to support your family, and in return, we also appreciate your continuous support.